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## Media Release

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### **Attorney General Biden announces progress in effort to combat nuisance crimes**

Legislation introduced to strengthen nuisance abatement laws

**Wilmington, DE** – Attorney General Joseph R. Biden, III joined legislative leaders and state and local law enforcement officials today to announce the introduction of legislation to amend the current Drug Nuisance and Social Vices Abatement Act.

Senate Bill 80, sponsored by Senator Patricia Blevins, Representative Charles Oberle, and Representative Helene Keeley, strengthens the current statute by clarifying judicial guidelines and evidentiary standards. It also creates a permanent fund to support nuisance abatement efforts.

Specifically, the legislation will:

- Make it clear that property owners who facilitate, permit, or promote a nuisance on their property will be held liable.
- Provides notice to owners who fail to abate nuisances on their property of the factors that the Department of Justice will use to permanently shut them down, including such things as the history and severity of the nuisance activity as well as the impact of the nuisance upon any neighborhood or community organization.
- Establish the Attorney General's Nuisance Abatement Fund, which will be used by this Department specifically to investigate and prosecute these criminal activities. The account is funded through actions taken against nuisance properties and monies awarded by the courts for costs or attorneys fees.

"Property owners who permit nuisance crimes on their premises have one of two choices," Attorney General Biden said. "They can litigate the matter as a defendant and ultimately be forced to clean up their properties by court order, or they can cooperate with the Department of Justice, avoid a costly legal battle and possible closure, and voluntarily take active measures to rid their properties of nuisance activities."

"Today we are sending a clear message that the State of Delaware will not tolerate these safe havens for drug dealers and criminals," Biden said. "Property owners will not be able to turn a blind eye – we will hold you accountable."

"That is why I introduced the Drug Nuisance and Social Vices Abatement Act five years ago, and why I stand here with the Attorney General and our partners in law enforcement today Senator Blevins said."



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"As legislators, we are charged with representing the communities we serve," Representative William Oberle said. "Today, we have taken yet another step to answering this important call to action by strengthening the current statute. With the partnership between legislators, local law enforcement and the Department of Justice, Delaware will be a safer and better place to live."

Attorney General Biden also announced that the Department of Justice filed a complaint in Superior Court against a nearby property, located along the Route 9 corridor, to abate illegal activity on the property. In addition, four property owners, each of whom had earlier received written notices from the Department of Justice, had agreed to comply with the Department's demands through formal agreements.

The agreements demand that property owners take immediate and significant action to abate the nuisances on their properties, including:

- Hiring security guards to patrol their properties
- Installing security cameras
- Improving lighting
- Constructing fencing
- Preventing loitering

Attorney General Biden noted that the Community Center where he stands today borders two of these properties. The actions being taken by the Department of Justice to enforce the Drug Nuisance and Social Vices Abatement Act will have a clear and positive impact upon this community.

"The legislation we have proposed today is vital to the safety of our communities and goes a long way to remedying nuisances throughout our state, Representative Helene Keeley said. "We passed this legislation with the intent to make a difference for our families, our friends and our neighbors, and I am pleased that the Department of Justice is taking the initiative to do just that."

Nuisance abatement agreements are intended to revive our communities and improve the quality of life of Delaware's citizens. They provide relief to the residents in the surrounding area by mandating that business owners make their premises less hospitable to the criminal element. Ultimately, the settlements send the message to other business owners that the level of crime that persists in many areas will not be tolerated.

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